

Educational attainment and inequality in Scotland: How does Scotland compare with the rest of the UK?

Date & time: 13:30-16:30, Wednesday 28th August 2013

Venue: Seminar Rooms 1 & 2, The Chrystal MacMillan Building, University of Edinburgh

Speaker biographies

Dr Gill Wyness

Research Officer, Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics and Political Science

Dr Gill Wyness is a Research Officer at the Centre for Economic Performance (CEP), London School of Economics, where her specialism is in the economics of education in the UK.

She is currently working on a number research projects evaluating randomized control trials in schools in the UK – including a programme which aimed to find out what school students know about the costs and benefits of going to university – and what would be the impact on their knowledge and aspirations of an ‘information campaign’ focused on the costs and returns to higher education.

In her work on higher education, she is currently leading a research project which aims to evaluate the impact of higher education bursaries on performance and drop-out rates of university students. Her work has also involved evaluating a number of UK government tuition fee and higher education finance policies. She is a regular contributor to the Guardian higher education network blog, and has given evidence at the Browne review of higher education finance in 2010.

Gill joined CEP from the Institute of Fiscal Studies. She has a degree in economics from the University of Abertay, Dundee, an MSc in Economics and Econometrics from the University of Southampton, and she obtained her PhD from the Institute of Education, University of London, in 2010.

Professor David Raffe

Director, Centre for Educational Sociology, University of Edinburgh

David Raffe is Professor of Sociology of Education at the University of Edinburgh, where he has worked since 1975. He is a member of the University’s Centre for Educational Sociology, which he directed from 1987 to 2001 (jointly with Andrew McPherson to 1995) and from 2010 to 2012. His research covers all stages of education and training from secondary onwards. Recent research projects have included a review of national differences in education-work transitions, several studies of qualifications frameworks and related reforms, a comparison of credit transfer systems in Europe, a study of access and institutional differences in higher education and analyses of convergence and divergence in education policy across the devolved administrations of the UK. Much of his research has been international or comparative in nature and he helped to pioneer ‘home international’ comparisons of the UK’s education systems. He has participated in several Scottish and UK policy committees and working groups, and he currently serves on committees of the Scottish Qualifications Authority and the Scottish Funding Council.

Dr Bill Maxwell

Chief Executive, Education Scotland

Dr Bill Maxwell was appointed as Chief Executive of Education Scotland in May 2011. Education Scotland has been established by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning as a new style of integrated improvement agency, supporting quality and improvement in Scottish Education. Bill previously held the post of Senior Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland and, prior to that, Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales.

Dr Maxwell began his career in 1984 working as an Educational Psychologist in the South-West of Scotland. He became Principal Psychologist in Aberdeen before joining HM Inspectorate of Education in 1994. He initially worked as an Inspector in the North of Scotland, undertaking postings as a District Inspector and Lead Inspector for Quality Standards and Audit, before progressing to head of the Northern Division, head of the secondary education directorate and laterally head of pre-school and independent schools inspection.

From 2006 to 2008 he was seconded to The Scottish Government as Head of Education and Analytical Services and in February 2008 he moved south to take up post as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales on 1 February 2008. He took the Welsh Inspectorate through a major review of its core business and organisational structure before moving back to Scotland to take up the post as HM Senior Chief Inspector on 15 February 2010.

Kate Davidson

Director, SWAP East

Kate Davidson has been involved in Student Recruitment & Admissions within the University sector for over 20 years. She started her HE career in Queen Margaret College (as it was then) before moving to the University of Stirling as Head of Undergraduate Admissions.

She moved to SWAP East in 2011 as Director of the Scottish Wider Access Programme. SWAP is a partnership organisation between the FE Colleges and Universities in Scotland in order to run Access programmes for adults returning to education with a view to progress to higher education. Students have, largely, few or no qualifications and been out of education for some time. As Director of SWAP East, Kate facilitates the operation of SWAP supporting the Colleges, Universities and the students on these programmes.

Over the years she was on many Scottish and UK-side working groups led both by UCAS and other bodies on various admissions matters. She was a member of UCAS' Change User Group and was on the Steering Group for Supporting Professional in Admissions (SPA) project.

Kate has been involved in the widening access agenda for all her years in Higher Education. She has presented at many conference and workshops on this topic. Her move to her current post two years ago has not lessened this involvement albeit within the adult age range.